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ABSTRACT

In 1991, Griffin and Anderson examined the preferences of a sample of South Georgia employees regarding resume content, appearance, and format. The Georgia study was replicated with a sample of 60 hiring officials from a variety of companies in northwestern Missouri to determine if geographic location is a factor in hiring officials' preferences regarding resume content, appearance, and format. The Missouri study had a 67% response rate (versus 92% for the Georgia study). The Missouri study included a metropolitan area, the Georgia study rural areas only. Hiring officials in both states expressed similar preferences regarding resume content, appearance, and format. The Missouri hiring officials rated 25 resume content items as most important and 8 content items as least important. A one- or two-page resume on white paper was preferred. Six content items were considered significantly more important by hiring officials from northwestern Missouri than from southern Georgia: address/telephone number of employing company, name of college, professional organization memberships, college athletic involvement, high school extracurricular activities, and birth place and birth date. It was recommended that business educators update their job application/resume curricula to reflect hiring officials' preferences and that similar studies be completed to ask hiring officials for their specific resume format preferences. (The survey instrument is appended.) (MN)

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EMPLOYER PREFERENCES REGARDING RESUME CONTENT, APPEARANCE, AND FORMAT

A Replication in Northwest Missouri of a Study of South Georgia's Hiring Officials

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EMPLOYER PREFERENCES REGARDING RESUME CONTENT, APPEARANCE, AND FORMAT

A Replication in Northwest Missouri of a Study of South Georgia's Hiring Officials

In the past decade there have been numerous studies conducted to examine what preferences hiring officials have regarding resume content. Specifically, the studies have examined format of the resume, style, length, appearance, educational information, work experience, activities, references, and other related items. While there has been consensus on some areas to include, there continues to be disagreement regarding other resume content areas.

Educators have been concerned with resume content because a student's ability to obtain employment has been linked to resume preparation. Therefore, educators need to teach resume writing skills to students. In order for this task to be accomplished effectively, it is critical to know employers' preferences for resume content.

Purpose of the Study

What preferences do hiring officials have regarding resume content, appearance, and format when making the decision to offer an interview to a candidate?

The purpose of the study was to determine if employers in Northwest Missouri had preferences that compared to the South Georgia employers studied by Griffin and Anderson in 1991. For applicants in this geographic region, the knowledge of the preferences of area employers would assist when developing a resume. Applicants whose resumes are matched with hiring officials' preferences of resume content, appearance, and format will have accomplished the goal of a resume--to secure an interview.

The South Georgia study replicated the study of Harcourt, Krizan, and Merrier in 1989, which studied the resume content items selected as important by a nationwide sample of hiring officials and college recruiters. This study also examined items that were determined not to have a major influence on the hiring official and revealed what information would be included on the resume, the preferred length, the preferred format, and how references should be listed.

Anderson and Griffin, in their South Georgia study, compared responses between their findings and the nationwide study. It was determined that the national sample was a good reflection of the preference of employers in a metropolitan area. However, the data collected from the South Georgia sample reflected the preferences of rural employers. With Northwest Missouri also being a rural area, the South Georgia study serves as the basis for which the results from the Northwest Missouri employers will be compared.

Methods and Procedures of the Study

This descriptive and replicative study compared a sampling of South Georgia hiring officials' preferences to a sampling of Northwest Missouri hiring officials' preferences. The study sought to identify if preferences of employers can change in a three-year period (1991-1994) and if preferences of employers in geographic regions of the nation differ.

A cover letter and survey (page 7) were sent in April 1994 to 60 Northwest Missouri businesses to determine resume content preferences of the hiring officials. Hiring officials were asked to identify the company's type of business and approximate size of the company, were asked if a resume was required, and asked for preferred resume length and the preferred color of paper for a resume. A checklist where respondents ranked resume content items as either important or unimportant was also a part of the survey. The original instrument was developed by Griffin and Anderson for their study of South Georgia employers' preferences in 1991. The only changes to the original survey used with Northwest Missouri employers were the addition of two questions identifying the type of business and the approximate size of the company.

The sample population of the Northwest Missouri study consisted of 60 companies in financial, manufacturing, retail/sales, health/medical, wholesale, educational, and insurance fields. Companies were selected by listings in the yellow page telephone directories of Cameron, Chillicothe, Kansas City, Maryville, and St. Joseph, Missouri. The telephone directory was used as the researchers assumed all businesses would be listed in the yellow page telephone directories of their cities. Six to seven businesses for each field were selected.

Hiring officials within each company would be the person(s) responsible for hiring entry-level personnel, and this could include human resource managers, owners, office managers, or presidents. The Northwest Missouri geographic region was identified by the following boundaries:

North--the Missouri/Iowa border	South--Interstate 70
West--the Missouri/Kansas border	East--Highway 65

Research Questions and Results

This study answered the following research questions with the resulting data:

1. ***What item(s) are considered most important on a resume by Northwest Missouri hiring officials?***

2. ***What item(s) are considered least important on a resume by Northwest Missouri hiring officials?***

TABLE 1
RESUME ITEMS RESULTS

	Percentage Northwest MO Employers
Name, address, telephone number	100.0
Address and telephone number of employing company	95.0
Employing company(s)	95.0
Degree obtained and major	92.5
Duties of work experience	90.0
Summary of qualifications	90.0
Dates of employment	85.0
Job titles held	85.0
Achievements in work	82.5
Name of college	82.5
Career objective	77.5
Reason(s) for leaving job(s)	77.5
Special aptitudes/skills	75.0
Job objective	72.5
Community involvement	67.5
Willingness to relocate	67.5
College achievements	62.5
Salaries received from job(s)	62.5
Work supervisor's name	62.5
GPA in major	57.5
References supplied only on request	57.5
Overall College GPA	57.5
Professional organization memberships	57.5
References, listing names and addressees	55.0
Years attended college	55.0
Combined job and career objective	50.0
Hobbies, interests	47.5
College extracurricular activities	37.5
Military experience	37.5
Specific courses taken in major	35.0
College athletic involvement	27.5
Publications	27.5
Church involvement	25.0
Personal information	25.0
Date of graduation from college	22.5
Awards and honors from high school	20.0
High school extracurricular activities	17.5
Name of high school	17.5
Birthplace and birthdate	10.0

* Items 55.0 And Higher Rated As Most Important
** Items 33.0 And Lower Rated As Least Important

TABLE 2
PREFERRED LENGTH OF A RESUME

	Percentage Northwest MO Employers
No longer than two pages	47.5
No longer than one page	20.0
Determined by essential information	32.5

TABLE 3
PREFERRED COLOR OF PAPER

	Percentage Northwest MO Employers
White	65.0
Not important	25.0
Off-white	10.0
Gray	0.0

3. *How do Northwest Missouri hiring officials' responses compare to the South Georgia sample of hiring officials from 1991?*

TABLE 4
COMPARISON OF PREFERRED RESUME ITEMS

	Percentage	
	Northwest MO Employers	South GA Employers
Name, address, telephone number	100.0	100.0
Employing company(s)	95.0	86.0
Address and telephone number of employing company	95.0	72.0
Degree obtained and major	92.5	95.0
Summary of qualifications	90.0	88.0
Duties of work experience	90.0	95.0
Job titles held	85.0	79.0
Dates of employment	85.0	86.0
Name of college	82.5	72.0
Achievements in work	82.5	74.0
Career objective	77.5	70.0
Reason(s) for leaving job(s)	77.5	72.0
Special aptitudes/skills	75.0	79.0
Job objective	72.5	79.0
Community involvement	67.5	67.0
Willingness to relocate	67.5	58.0
Work supervisor's name	62.5	67.0

4. *Are there any significant differences in the results of the two samples?*

TABLE 5
RESUME CONTENT DIFFERENCES*

	Percentage	
	Northwest MO Employers	South GA Employers
Address and telephone number of employing company(s)	95.0	72.0
Name of college	82.5	72.0
Professional organization memberships	57.5	47.0
College athletic involvement	27.5	14.0
High school extracurricular activities	17.5	2.0
Birthplace and birthdate	10.0	28.0

*Operationally defined as ≥ 10% difference

5. ***If there are any significant differences, is there any indication as to the reason for the difference between the two samples?***
   Four possible reasons for differences in the six items found in Table 5 are offered:
   a. The Northwest Missouri study included the northern area of a metropolitan area (Kansas City). The metropolitan hiring officials may have different staffing needs and requirements of applicants than of more rural areas. The South Georgia study included only rural areas.

   b. The rate of return, even after two requests, for the Northwest Missouri study was 67 percent. The South Georgia study had a higher return rate of 92 percent.

   c. The Northwest Missouri study was completed three years after the South Georgia study.

   d. Because collegiate faculty conducted the South Georgia study, hiring officials may have responded with preferences for college graduates. The Northwest Missouri study was completed initially by an employment and training consultant.

Conclusions

1. Northwest Missouri hiring officials rated as most important 25 resume content items. Preferred was a resume of 1-2 pages on white paper.

2. Northwest Missouri hiring officials rated as least important 8 resume content items.

3. Hiring officials in Northwest Missouri and South Georgia have similar preferences regarding resume content, appearance, and format.

4. Hiring officials in Northwest Missouri and South Georgia rated significantly different six resume content items.

Recommendations

1. Business educators should update the job application/resume curriculum to reflect the preferences of hiring officials.

2. A similar study should be completed asking hiring officials specific resume format preferences.

EMPLOYER SURVEY ON RESUME CONTENT PREFERENCES

1. Which category best describes your business?

Financial _____ Wholesale _____ Manufacturing _____
Educational _____ Retail/Sales _____ Insurance _____
Health/Medical _____ Other _____

2. Approximate number of employees:

Less than 25 _____ 26-50 _____ 51-100 _____ More than 100 _____

3. Do you require a job applicant to submit a resume? Yes _____ No _____

4. What is the preferred length of a college graduate's resume?

No longer than one page _____ No longer than two pages _____
Determined by essential information _____

5. What color of paper do you prefer the resume be printed on?

White _____ Off-white _____ Gray _____ Not important _____

6. From the following list of possible resume content items for college graduates, mark **1** if you consider it an important resume item; mark **2** if you consider it as unimportant.

_____ a. Name, address, telephone number
_____ b. Job objective
_____ c. Career objective
_____ d. Combined job and career objectives
_____ e. Summary of qualifications
_____ f. Degree obtained and major
_____ g. Name of college
_____ h. Date of graduation from college
_____ i. Years attended college
_____ j. Specific courses taken in major
_____ k. College achievements (such as awards, honors, leadership roles)
_____ l. Overall grade point average in college
_____ m. Grade point average in college major
_____ n. College extracurricular activities (such as clubs, fraternities)
_____ o. Athletic involvement in college
_____ p. Professional organization membership
_____ q. Special aptitudes/skills
_____ r. Name of high school attended
_____ s. Date of graduation from high school
_____ t. Awards and honors from high school
_____ u. Extracurricular activities from high school
_____ v. Job titles held
_____ w. Employing company(s)
_____ x. Address and telephone number of employing company(s)
_____ y. Duties of employment
_____ z. Duties of work experience
_____ aa. Achievements in work (such as learning, contributions, accomplishments)
_____ bb. reason(s) for leaving job(s)
_____ cc. Work supervisor/s name
_____ dd. Salaries received from job(s)
_____ ee. Military experience
_____ ff. Hobbies, interests
_____ gg. Publications
_____ hh. Community involvement
_____ ii. Church involvement
_____ jj. Willingness to relocate
_____ kk. Personal information (such as height, weight, health, gender, race, religion, marital status)
_____ ll. Birthplace and birthdate
_____ mm. References supplied only on request
_____ nn. References, listing names and addresses